

DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL

The California Highway Patrol is a law enforcement and traffic safety agency reporting to Business, Transportation and Housing Agency Secretary Maria Contreras-Sweet and Governor Gray Davis.



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CHP WILL GUIDE TRAFFIC SAFETY PROGRAM FOR OLDER CALIFORNIANS

SACRAMENTO—Trimming traffic deaths and injuries among California's older population will be the objective of a far-reaching safety program announced today by the California Highway Patrol and cooperating agencies.

Joining the CHP in the collaborative statement were the State Departments of Motor Vehicles, Transportation, Aging, and Health Services, the Office of Traffic Safety, and the Center for Injury Prevention Policy and Practice. CIPPP directed a task force through nearly two-years of study to produce the comprehensive outline that the CHP will follow in steering the program.

CHP Commissioner D.O. "Spike" Helmick said his department will "build an oversight team including organizations with a direct stake in the safety of seniors. When the CIPPP task force recommended we take on the role of program manager, we did so because this is basically a traffic safety issue. We think we can help reduce the death and injury rate among older vehicle occupants and pedestrians."

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Patti Yanocho, coordinator of Older Adult Traffic Safety Programs for CIPPP (located at San Diego State University), said the task force report “recognizes that the rapidly growing senior population threatens a parallel increase in traffic casualties. When baby boomers begin to retire in 2011, the figures could surge even higher.”

She said the report calls for “institutionalizing” an injury reduction strategy that relies on improved driver licensing procedures, greater involvement of health care professionals, better highway signing and pedestrian amenities, safer vehicles, establishing a community-based network of driver assessment-rehabilitation specialists, and a major educational effort that informs seniors, their families and caregivers, and the public how aging affects older persons as drivers and pedestrians.

The California Office of Traffic Safety funded the task force, with supplemental contributions from the Automobile Club of Southern California. Teresa Becher, interim director of OTS, said her agency “wants to create an aggressive statewide program that reaches out to seniors and engages the entire community. We applaud the partnership approach being taken by the CHP to build a strong working coalition.”

Also indicating support are Lynda Terry, director of the Department of Aging; Diana M. Bonta, director of the Department of Health Services; Steven Gourley, director of the Department of Motor Vehicles; and Jeff Morales, director of the California Department of Transportation. Each department contributed to the task force studies, along with other public and private agencies. The CHP expects to seek participation of all in developing the safety program.

Commissioner Helmick said the oversight committee will be formed in early 2003.

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